

Behavioral Interviewing



The goal of a behavioral interview is very simple: to see how somebody might behave under varying circumstances. The following is a partial list of circumstances that can show up. Add questions unique to your environment too. You can discuss the who, what, where, why and how of behaviors around:

1. Not being clear about job tasks.
2. Having difficulty with a co-worker.
3. Having difficulty with a boss.
4. Feeling your talents aren't being properly utilized.
5. Managing a challenging project either due to lack of resources, time or other pressures.
6. Having made an error or dealing with somebody you manage who's made an error.
7. Setting goals and making sure you execute on them.
8. Making an unpopular decision.
9. Examples of how you motivate or engage people you manage or co-workers.
10. What are some innovative or creative solutions that you've helped to generate to solve a problem?

And the catch-all question, "We've done a fair amount of behavioral interviewing, today and I've learned a lot you as a result. What other behaviors, both positive and negative, have we yet to discuss?"

My Three Favorite Behavioral Questions

1. Tell me something that felt unfair to you in your last job? This is my favorite interview question of all, to understand somebody's behaviors. Our personal culture is largely defined by how we deal with what feels unfair to us. So dig into it. If they tell you nothing felt unfair about their last job, then guess what... they are lying... and I won't hire a liar. However, when they do tell you something felt unfair, now you get to ask additional questions. For example, why did it feel unfair? What did you do about it? I would go through their entire resume and ask that question about all their recent jobs.
2. Now we go to the other extreme. What were you most excited about (in your previous job and other jobs)? Once again, why, why, why? Ask yourself if there's a position at your company where the applicant can do the work they are most excited about. That's where they tend to be most productive.
3. The third question I like to ask relates to how well they know themselves. The question is this: "What are three things you think the people you have worked with would like to see you change about yourself?" If they say nothing, then they have the fantasy they are perfect, and I'm not hiring them. Most people would know the answer to that question, including you. When they eventually tell me what those three things are, I'll find out from them what effort they've made to address those concerns.

You can understand how powerful these questions are by applying them to yourself. What feels unfair to you? What are you most excited about? What would people like to see you change about yourself? They are a great source of inquiry and awareness.

What are your favorite behavioral interviewing questions?